AFRICA RECOVERY

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Focus on African partnership

Africa's new continental development strategy, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), has been endorsed by the UN General Assembly as the main framework for international support for the continent. Meanwhile, in Africa, discussions about the ambitious programme are intensifying.

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African women struggle for a seat at the peace table

By Michael Fleshman

The Hutu women of Busoro, near the Burundi capital, Bujumbura, are separated from their Tutsi neighbours in Musaga village by little more than a dirt road and the country's bitter civil conflict. For years that was barrier enough as the fighting ebbed and flowed around them. Over time, the sound of gunfire echoing through the green hills became almost routine, and the absence of the men, off to war or gone in search of jobs, came to seem normal. It was the screaming of the wounded that was hardest to take — that and the fear that knotted the stomach even after the guns and the cries fell silent.

Until one day it simply became too much to endure. With fires still burning from the latest battle, the women of Musaga collected what food and clothing they could for victims in Busoro. Then they marched to the local government office, where they rallied with their sisters from Busoro to demand an end to the killing. The Tutsi and Hutu women clasped hands to sing "Give us peace. Give us peace now!"

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Famine spreads across Africa

With 38 million facing starvation, "business as usual will not do"

By **Ernest Harsch**

On a scale not seen in Africa in nearly two decades, famine is once again stalking the continent. According to estimates by the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), as many as 38 million Africans are living under the threat of starvation, and many will succumb if emergency relief does not reach them in time. As of mid-2002, famine conditions were concentrated mainly in Southern Africa, but by the end of the year they had emerged just as severely in the Horn of Africa, and on a lesser scale in several countries in West and Central Africa (see map, page 4).

"This is an unprecedented crisis, which calls for an unprecedented response," WFP Executive Director James Morris warned the UN Security Council on 3 December, during a session devoted to considering Africa's food crisis as a threat to peace and security. "The magnitude of the disaster unfolding in Africa has not been fully grasped by the international community.... An exceptional effort is urgently needed if a major catastrophe is to be averted. Business as usual will not do."

Mr. Morris and other participants in the Security Council debate pointed to a variety of factors contributing to the current crisis:

- drought and other difficult weather conditions in many of the affected countries, bringing low harvests and driving up the price of food;
- the debilitating impact of HIV/AIDS, which leaves those infected less able to stave off the ravages of hunger and weakens local farming systems by killing off millions of Africa's most productive farmers;
- armed conflict or political strife, as in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Zimbabwe, and the difficulties confronting countries only recently emerging from conflict, including Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sierra Leone;
- inadequate economic policies, especially in agriculture, which in many affected countries have brought too little investment in farming inputs, rural infrastructure or essential social services — problems compounded by the poor prices African farm exports fetch on the world market.

For relief organizations, the most immediate challenge is mobilizing enough food, medical care and other assistance to prevent massive loss of life in the famine-stricken countries. This will not be easy, and pledges have been lagging well behind needs. Yet, as WFP Deputy Executive Director Jean-Jacques Graisse emphasized on 16 December, during the launch of an international "Africa Hunger Alert" campaign, "Progress is possible, if the political will is there."

Child sifting amidst sacks of relief grain in Lesotho. Emergency aid is vital, but "just shipping in food is not enough," says UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Poverty and other causes of famine must also be addressed.

WFP/ILO

The underlying factors contributing to Africa's recurrent cycles of famine also highlight the need for greater attention to long-term strategies to promote development and peace. "Just shipping in food is not enough," UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated in a 9 December address at New York's Columbia University that focused on women, AIDS and the Southern African famine.

Drought and infection

In the seven most severely affected countries of Southern Africa, nearly 16 million people are in urgent need of food aid. Drought is the most immediate reason. Earlier hopes that sufficient rain would fall in time for the 2002/03 planting season, after poor harvests in early 2002, have now been dashed.

According to the Famine Early Warning Systems (FEWS) Network of the US Agency for International Development, important grain-producing areas of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique experienced "substantially inhibited" rainfall during the last months of 2002. Although South Africa itself is not threatened by famine, the UN regional office in Johannesburg noted that inadequate rain for the country's maize, wheat, sunflower, sorghum and soya crops will have a serious impact beyond its borders, since it is the main food exporter to the rest of the region.

In his 9 December address, Mr. Annan noted that most of the Southern African countries now hit by drought are also battling serious AIDS epidemics. "This is no coincidence. AIDS and

famine are directly linked." One way they are linked, he pointed out, is through the role of Africa's women, who provide most agricultural labour and have long been at the centre of communities' efforts to adapt to famine conditions. Now, however, "as AIDS is eroding the strength of Africa's women, it is eroding the skills, experience and networks that kept their families and communities going."

Therefore, Mr. Annan stated, the international community "will have to combine food assistance and new approaches to farming with treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS." Among other things, this will require integrating HIV and famine early-warning and analysis systems, the introduction of new agricultural techniques appropriate to depleted workforces, renewed efforts to wipe out the stigma of HIV, and innovative and large-scale efforts to care for and support the most vulnerable, especially orphans and other young people in AIDS-stricken communities. "Above all," Mr. Annan said, "this new international effort must put women at the centre of our strategy to fight AIDS."

'Zero tolerance'

Political strife has further complicated the situation. In Southern Africa, Zimbabwe accounts for the greatest number of people affected: 6.7 million, due to a staggering cereal deficit of 1.5 mn tonnes. Although drought has been the main cause of Zimbabwe's poor harvests, analysts have also pointed to the impact of political tensions and the government's controversial land reform policies. After members of Zimbabwe's ruling party seized some WFP food stocks in October for distribution to party supporters, Mr. Annan reaffirmed the UN's "zero tolerance" policy against distributing food on the basis of political affiliation.

In Angola, the signing of a peace agreement in April 2002 has brought a dramatic decline in that country's long civil war. Ironically, however, this has led to an increase in the amount of food and other relief assistance required, since hundreds of thousands of Angolans previously beyond the reach of relief agencies can now be assisted. At the beginning of 2002, the WFP was feeding about 1 million Angolans, a number that climbed to 1.8 million by early December. By the turn of the year, an additional 100,000 Angolan refugees were expected to begin returning home from Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The WFP warns that relief pledges have not kept pace with Angola's mounting requirements. In October, the agency appealed for $241 mn to help feed about 1.5 million beneficiaries at that time. As of late December, only about a third of the amount had been pledged. With no further pledges, the food in the WFP's pipeline will run out by March. And by that point, the number of Angolans needing food aid could well climb to between 2.1 and 2.4 million.

'Poverty is at the root'

Serious famine conditions have also developed in the Horn of Africa, principally Ethiopia and Eritrea, just two years after the end of a devastating war between the two countries. The UN, Ethiopian government, relief agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), after assessing the full impact of Ethiopia's

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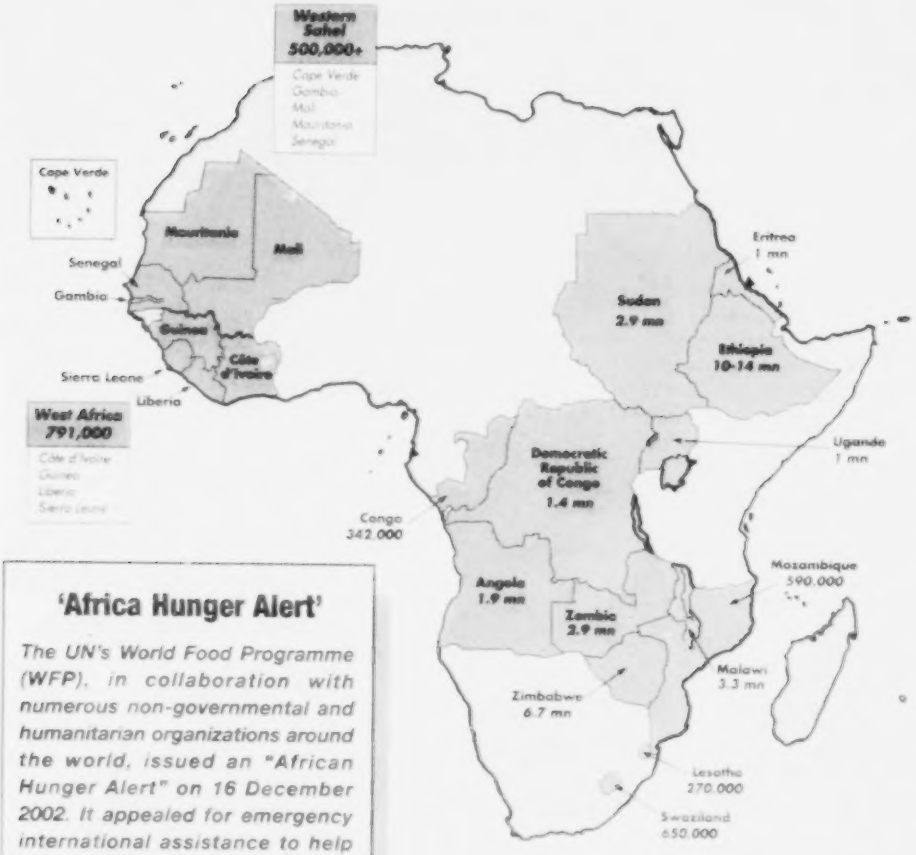
Millions threatened by African famines



The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Source: UN Africa Recovery, from OFFP data

'Africa Hunger Alert'

The UN's World Food Programme (WFP), in collaboration with numerous non-governmental and humanitarian organizations around the world, issued an "African Hunger Alert" on 16 December 2002. It appealed for emergency international assistance to help feed and care for some 38 million Africans threatened by famine.

Controversy rages over 'GM' food aid

Zambia, citing health concerns, bars genetically modified grain

By **Olga Manda**
Lusaka

Southern African governments find themselves in a dilemma: they have to choose between letting their citizens starve to death or giving them genetically modified food aid that many believe may be harmful to health.

That was the predicament facing the region's cash-strapped governments when the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) provided them with thousands of tonnes of emergency food aid to help combat severe famine conditions. Some of the food came from donor countries, such as the US, which produce large quantities of genetically modified (GM) maize and other grains.

Several governments in the region objected to the GM grain, especially Zambia and Zimbabwe, the countries hardest hit by the drought. Citing health and environmental concerns, Zimbabwe blocked the GM food aid from entering the country. In Zambia, where some GM grain had already arrived, the government placed it under lock and key, banned its distribution and then blocked another 40,000 tonnes that were in the pipeline.

Zambia's withered grain fields. Does genetically modified relief food pose health risks?

Scientific uncertainty

In Zambia, the decision came after months of intense debate. Environmental and other "watchdog" groups critical of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have been influential, and through networking, forums and protests applied pressure on the government. Local civic groups and scientists conducted a study tour of the US, India, South Africa and Europe to investigate views about genetic modification. "We established from all the countries we visited that GMOs are a health hazard," the team maintained after returning to Lusaka.

Many Zambians believe that GMOs cause resistance to antibiotics, thereby cutting immunity to diseases, and that they may lead to the emergence of new food toxins or to allergies in people with poor health. "For Zambia, most people in outlying areas are of an average health status," argued Dr Mwanamyanda Mbikusita-Lewanika, a Zambian scientist, "and if consumption [of GM grains] is high, then toxicity would equally increase."

Mercedes Sayagues, in South Africa, also contributed to this report.

Proponents of genetically modified foods counter that there is no solid evidence that they are, in fact, harmful to health. Even some of those who do, such as Dr. Tewolde Berhan G. Egziabher, an Ethiopian scientist and one of Africa's chief negotiators on biodiversity and biosafety, acknowledge that famine conditions require an emergency response. "The short-term effects of malnutrition coupled with HIV/AIDS outweigh the long-term effects of GM foods on health," argues Dr. Tewolde.

Reacting to the concerns in Southern Africa, the UN's WFP, Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization issued a joint statement in August 2002 stating that "the consumption of foods containing GMOs now being provided as food aid in Southern Africa is not likely to present human health risk. Therefore, these foods may be eaten." The UN agencies affirmed, however, that each recipient country has a right to accept or reject the entry of GM foods.

Some critics raise a separate concern: that genetically modified seeds may contaminate local crop varieties, known in scientific terms as "out-crossing." In addition to worries about the unknown effects on indigenous biodiversity, such contamination in turn could hinder exports to the European Union, which strictly controls GM experimentation and generally prohibits importation of such organisms.

In response to this particular concern, some African countries, including Lesotho and Mozambique, are milling the GM grain so that there are no seeds to enter the local farming system and the grain can only be eaten. Some contributing countries have offered to pay for the milling, including South Africa, the only country in the region that grows GM foods on a large scale.

As a result of such initiatives, Zimbabwe relaxed its earlier position by allowing in GM grain, provided it is milled upon entry. But Zambia did not.

'Zambians are not guinea pigs'

Although nearly 30 per cent of Zambia's 10.2 million people are facing starvation, the government of President Levy Mwanawasa has bowed to the concerns about the potential hazards of genetic modification and has flatly refused to accept GM grain. President Mwanawasa has repeatedly said that until he has sufficient and credible information to the contrary, he will not risk feeding Zambians a "poison" that could have long-term effects.

The government has said it will follow the "cautionary principle," which states that in the face of scientific uncertainty, a country should not take action that might adversely affect human and animal health or harm the environment. Noting that it currently has no technological capacity to handle GMOs, the administration nevertheless announced that it will set up a task force to study the issue more closely.

In the meantime, President Mwanawasa has asked Zambians to be "patient" while the government does all it can to secure non-GM food.

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World body endorses NEPAD

UN negotiations bring agreement to back African initiative

The decision of the UN General Assembly on 4 November to officially endorse the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) symbolizes "a new start for the international community in its interaction with Africa," South African Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo said as he introduced the resolution. It also means "that Africa has again given notice before the international community of its commitment to take responsibility for its own future."

The resolution (A/RES/57/7) was the fruit of eight days of "difficult" negotiations, Mr. Kumalo noted more than two weeks earlier, after a late-night session brought final agreement on its wording. Originally set for 7-11 October, the talks had to be extended until 17 October, as delegates from both developing and developed countries haggled over the precise language.

Ultimately, the developing countries' Group of 77 (G-77), which produced the resolution's initial draft, achieved its basic objective: to secure approval for the official endorsement of NEPAD as "the framework, around which the international community, including the United Nations system, should concentrate its efforts for Africa's development." The New Partnership had already been formally approved by African governments in 2001, and won support at the June 2002 summit of the Group of Eight industrialized countries. But strong backing for NEPAD by the UN General Assembly represents a more universal commitment towards its success.

While judging that "this first effort seems somewhat hesitant," Mr. Kumalo nevertheless said that Africa appreciates the resolution's recognition of the continent's particular development needs. He expressed confidence that it will be possible to build on that recognition through "future deliberations."

'Two sides to tango'

Much work lies ahead, Mr. Ihab Gamaleldin, an Egyptian delegate and chair of the Africa Group, also observed at the close of the resolution's negotiations. To forge genuine partnership between Africa and the international community, he said, "It will take the efforts of the two sides to tango."

Since African governments had already negotiated NEPAD, there was no need for the General Assembly to go into detail about its objectives. The resolution therefore simply welcomed the New Partnership's priorities and encouraged African governments to integrate them into their national programmes.

Promoting African plan at the UN on 16 September: South African President Thabo Mbeki (left) and Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade.

The bulk of the resolution focused on support actions by the international community. Sticking closely to previously negotiated international commitments, these points included:

- urging developed countries "to make concrete efforts" toward providing 0.7 per cent of their gross national product as official development assistance, with "a significant share of such ODA to African countries"
- stressing the need to find a "durable solution" to the external debt problems of heavily indebted poor countries in Africa, "including through debt cancellation and other arrangements"
- calling for improved market access for African exports and for developed countries to encourage their private sectors to invest in Africa
- calling upon developed countries to channel resources towards the New Partnership's priorities, especially infrastructure development, health services, education, water and agriculture
- encouraging developing countries to further support South-South cooperation with Africa.

Africa does not view such actions as a list of separate items, Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, one of NEPAD's central promoters, made clear during a 16 September General Assembly debate on the plan. Africa's partners, he said, "should contribute to the fulfillment of an integrated approach, embracing trade, ODA and investment." For example, Mr. Bouteflika pointed out, improving aid and lifting barriers to African exports would both help attract more investments to Africa.

Millennium goals

The resolution underlined the importance of UN support for the New Partnership's implementation. It called on the UN system "to align its activities in Africa with the priorities of NEPAD," to enhance the coordination of all its work on Africa and to strengthen its cooperation with the African Union and other African institutions. Some initiatives are already under way. Others await specific decisions by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, including the establishment of a structure in New York to review and report on UN and international support for NEPAD.

As Mr. Annan noted to the General Assembly on 16 September, there is a very close fit between the priorities of the New Partnership and the international development goals adopted at the September 2000 UN Millennium Summit. Those goals, in fact, have been explicitly incorporated into the African plan.

"There is a symbiotic relationship between NEPAD and the Millennium Development Goals," he emphasized. "The NEPAD will not be a success if Africa fails to achieve the goals and the world as a whole cannot achieve the goals unless they are achieved in Africa." ■

Africans ponder New Partnership

NEPAD stimulates debate on development, democracy and global ties

By **Ernest Harsch**

Across the African continent, debate about the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is heating up. No longer are discussions about the strategy confined to a handful of government leaders and their expert advisers. Parliamentarians, civil society representatives, church figures, trade unionists and many others are now clamouring to be heard. Some believe NEPAD is on the right track, and are pressing African leaders to move rapidly towards implementation. Others worry that the plan itself may be fundamentally flawed.

What NEPAD seeks, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade said at the UN in September, is "partnership, not aid."

Whatever their particular outlooks, all seem to accept that the New Partnership, formally adopted in July 2001 by African heads of state, is now the continent's main official development framework. The international community also has come to that view. NEPAD was discussed extensively at the industrialized countries' Group of Eight (G-8) summit in June, and the UN General Assembly voted to endorse it on 4 November (see previous page).

In recent months, the signs of public interest in NEPAD have been growing:

- In late October, nearly 200 legislators from around Africa converged on Benin to endorse the New Partnership and discuss ways to advance it. By linking their own national concerns to the continental plan, parliamentarians are forging stronger "links of solidarity" across Africa, commented Mr. Adrien Houngbedji, speaker of Benin's National Assembly.
- Just a few days later, a conference of lawyers in Durban, South Africa, heard pleas to support NEPAD's objectives by promoting justice and respect for the law.
- In Senegal, future civil servants and judges now receive instruction in the New Partnership's goals and priorities, and university campuses regularly feature seminars and workshops on the topic. An association of "NEPAD clubs" has been launched to spread information about the programme, initially in Senegal's 11 regions and later in neighbouring countries as well. "Our aim is to become marketing agents to promote NEPAD among the people of Africa," explains Mr. Babacar Diagne, the association's president.

Although a number of governments and civil society groups have initiated debates about NEPAD, the process of public consultation has only just begun. Overall, knowledge about the New Partnership remains limited. Printed versions of NEPAD are not widely available outside government circles, and many Africans do not have speedy or affordable Internet access to download the on-line version of the lengthy document (www.gov.za/issues/nepad.htm).

A forum organized by non-governmental organizations in Abuja, Nigeria, maintained that little has been done to implement NEPAD domestically, even though the Nigerian government has been one of its most vocal promoters internationally. In Ghana, Ms. Ama Benyiwa-Doe complained in late October that she and other members of parliament "do not understand NEPAD."

Proponents of the New Partnership acknowledge that this is a problem. "NEPAD needs to be better explained and better understood by all development stakeholders," declared African ministers of finance, planning and economic development meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 19-20 October. So that the plan can have a real impact on the lives and livelihoods of Africa's people, they said, it will be vital "to engage parliaments and private and civil stakeholders in country-owned development strategies."

Soap-making demonstration in Meru, Kenya. NEPAD seeks to promote activities by women entrepreneurs.

At an earlier forum on NEPAD in New York, Prof. Adebayo Adedeji, a former executive secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, made the same point in somewhat stronger language. "Until NEPAD becomes owned by the people of Africa, its civil society and grassroots, the initiative will not take off at the national level. And without taking off at the national level, the plan is as dead as a dodo."

Still looking outward?

The New Partnership strongly emphasizes Africa's need to mobilize more resources domestically: through increased national savings and investment, more effective tax collection, rationalization of government expenditures and resolute action against corruption. Within that context, it sees external support — "partnership" — as complementary to Africa's own commitment and efforts.

However, because NEPAD was first presented in a prominent way to leaders of the major industrialized powers, an impression has been given that it will rely mainly on external backing: more aid and debt relief, greater access for African exports to Northern markets and significant new inflows of foreign investment. At an April 2002 consultation in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, between the African Development Bank and African civil society groups, the latter questioned the New Partnership's perspective. "The vision is built on selling Africa to the

outside," reported a summary of the civil society view. "There is a lack of internal strategy."

A few African leaders share that concern. At the launch of the African Union in Durban in early July, Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi maintained that NEPAD seeks to impose the "Western democratic model" on Africa, contrary to African religions and traditions. Later that same month, Gambian President Yahya Jammeh said that while he did not criticize NEPAD itself, he worried that its implementation seems dependent on "begging" from outsiders. "People have had enough of begging," he said, "and of an Africa of beggars." Also in late July, Namibian President Sam Nujoma, while discussing NEPAD, warned against "succumbing to foreign ideologies and influences."

Other African leaders deny that they aim to perpetuate Africa's aid dependency. When NEPAD seeks, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade said at the UN in September, is "partnership, not aid." Above all, he stressed, Africa needs to be able to produce more goods domestically and to enhance its foreign earnings by selling more on the world market.

Even with their best efforts, however, African countries will continue to face serious financing gaps for some years to come. For that reason, South African Finance Minister Trevor Manuel told the African ministers' meeting in Johannesburg, Africa must receive increased aid flows and further debt relief. The aid flows, however, need to be more predictable than in recent years and should be "supportive of the development strategies of the recipient countries."

> As the New Partnership as a whole moves closer to implementation, civil society involvement is likely to become more important across the plan's different priority areas.

Soliciting investments

The New Partnership also notes Africa's need to attract significantly greater foreign direct investment (FDI). Some African leaders put a particular emphasis on that source of financing. President Wade, who speaks frequently about the potential role of foreign investment in stimulating growth and development, helped initiate a NEPAD financing conference in Dakar in April, attended by numerous private investors from Africa and abroad. The following month the New Partnership was promoted at a tourism fair in South Africa, involving 1,500 enterprises from 70 countries. Then in September a West African regional conference on private sector support for NEPAD was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, drawing several hundred participants.

Many experts agree that Africa's investment potential is enormous, and that the continent already is attracting greater interest. Last year, FDI flows to Africa unexpectedly peaked to $17 bn, nearly twice the level the year before, according to estimates released in September by the UN Conference on Trade and Development. But there is still a tiny share of FDI flows worldwide. And within Africa, the flows go chiefly to a handful of countries, either major oil producers like Angola and Nigeria or more industrialized nations such as South Africa and Morocco.

Noting the difficulties that even South Africa faces in attracting significantly more FDI, Mr. Adedeji cautioned the New York forum in July that "the premises on which NEPAD has been based requires a critical and more realistic look, to avoid the negative consequences of unfulfilled high expectations." In a similar vein, UN Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari noted the "disappointment in some African quarters" over the donor countries' limited commitments at the G-8 summit (see *Africa Recovery*, September 2002). He urged supporters of the New Partnership not to engage in "wishful thinking."

Globalization and adjustment

Among civil society groups in Africa, the New Partnership's insistence that Africa must find ways to better harness the globalization process has been controversial. Since few Africans have seen any concrete benefits from world market integration — and many have actually suffered from its disruptions — there is a tendency to equate globalization with unfettered market forces and increasing inequalities between rich and poor.

At an April conference in Accra, Ghana, two prominent academic and non-governmental organizations, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa and the Third World Network-Africa, criticized perspectives that favoured "the inappropriate integration of our economies in the global order." Specifically on NEPAD, the two groups

Preparing NEPAD for delivery

After more than a year of discussions about the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, it is now time, says South African Deputy Finance Minister Mandisi Mpahlwa, to ask: "How do we deliver NEPAD?" To take the New Partnership forward, he told finance and development ministers from across the continent, they must concretely examine "how to take our macroeconomic gains down to the farmers in our rural villages and to the shopkeepers and hawkers in our cities, how to ensure that mothers can raise healthy children that can take advantage of well-run schools."

Such practical issues underlay much of the discussion at the 19-20 October ministers' meeting, organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa in Johannesburg. "The implementation of NEPAD starts with national policies," the ministers pointed out. From that perspective, governments will need to "move beyond the preoccupation with short-term macroeconomic reforms and towards policies for long-term investment and growth."

The October meeting in Johannesburg was just one of numerous recent initiatives to tailor NEPAD's implementation to specific countries, regions and sectors:

- African environment ministers have organized five sub-commissions to study projects to safeguard and better utilize the continent's natural resources. For example, a commission on Africa's coastal and marine environment, involving 11 countries, announced in late October that it had identified 140 national projects warranting closer study. Earlier, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, African leaders sought to win international support for NEPAD as the continent's new long-term agenda for sustainable development.
- The Economic Community of West African States has established a new ECOWAS Investment and Development Bank, with two windows. One is a regional investment bank to finance private sector investment in roads, energy and other physical infrastruc-

Construction site in Accra, Ghana. Will NEPAD's vision of global integration bring tangible benefits?

perceived a "neo-liberal economic policy framework at the heart of the plan, which repeats the structural adjustment policy packages of the preceding two decades and overlooks the disastrous effects of those policies."

Around the same time, the Organization of African Trade Union Unity, which represents most of Africa's union federations, complained that NEPAD "seems to hinge heavily" on neo-liberal perspectives. A later statement signed by 40 African civil society and human rights groups rejected the New Partnership outright, maintaining that it "accepts the fundamentals of the neo-liberal" framework underlying structural adjustment programmes.

In June, the South African Council of Churches complained that "NEPAD's vision is blurred by fixing its sights on increased global integration and rapid private sector growth."

As some advocates of NEPAD point out, such characterizations are a matter of interpretation. The document does look toward Africa's greater integration into world markets, but also embraces a number of elements that did not figure in structural adjustment policies. These include a strong state role in facilitating the development of roads, electricity networks and other infrastructure, the diversification of agricultural and industrial production and greater regional integration within Africa.

Only twice does NEPAD explicitly refer to structural adjustment. It demands that developed countries also be obliged to undergo structural adjustment, to remove protection on industries with which developing countries are competitive. Within Africa, it notes that adjustment programmes "provided only a partial solution," chiefly by removing price distortions, and that they "gave inadequate attention to the provision of social services."

However, some civil society groups have argued that the New Partnership itself does not sufficiently address social development issues. During a May Day celebration in Dakar, Mr Alioune Sow, head of one of Senegal's major labour federations, told President Wade that his union regretted "the absence of the social dimension in NEPAD." The South African Council of Churches charged that the plan seems "unaware of the severe negative social impact" in poor communities, as a result of rapid privatization of basic social services.

Gender blind?

Various parts of NEPAD touch on issues of gender equality and women's empowerment. One of the New Partnership's primary long-term objectives toward achieving sustainable development is "to promote the role of women in all activities." Specifically, this would entail eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education (by 2005), giving special attention to reducing poverty among women, ensuring that women farmers gain access to credit and can improve productivity, and targetting assistance to women entrepreneurs.

Among the positive responses was an international conference of women business leaders in Dakar in late June, in which those from Africa vowed to play their part in helping finance NEPAD's implementation.

Some have been more critical. Several of the civil society groups at the April meeting with the African Development Bank detected a "major gender gap" in the New Partnership, arguing that it "does not give adequate attention to gender-related issues." At a different conference that same month in Nairobi, Ms. Sara Hlupekile Longwe, from Zambia, claimed that NEPAD is "almost completely gender blind." While the New Partnership acknowledges the need for women's equality in economic and social development, she said, it is silent on gender issues when addressing democracy and governance. A similar point was raised in November by Ms. Mariame Ouattara, coordinator of the Network of African Women Economists, who detected in NEPAD a "near-total silence on the question of African women's rights."

To some extent, African leaders have acknowledged these concerns. At the launch of the African Union, the assembled heads of state issued a NEPAD declaration on democracy and good governance which stressed the importance of human rights, including for women. "In Africa's efforts at democracy, good governance and economic reconstruction," it declared, "women have a central role to play. We accept it as a binding obligation..."

Concerns specific to women may also gain greater attention as African countries move toward implementation of the New Partnership. The UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in a paper on NEPAD's implications for African policy makers circulated at the October ministerial conference in Johannesburg, noted that some countries are

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ture, with nearly half of its capital of $500 mn coming from the private sector. The other is a regional investment fund to finance public sector and poverty-reduction activities, with 90 per cent of its capital of $500 mn coming from member states and the remainder from donor institutions.

- Energy ministers from Africa and several developed countries, including France, Germany and the UK, met in early November to discuss projects to link African rural communities to national electricity networks. They also considered efforts to improve oil and gas distribution among African nations, including through gas pipelines from Nigeria to Senegal, Algeria and other neighbouring countries.

African 'peer review' is taking shape

As first countries join up, donors see participation as new condition for aid

One of the most anticipated — and controversial — elements in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has been the creation of a "peer review" process to improve standards of human rights, economic management, conflict resolution and democratic decision-making on the continent. As African leaders debate the specific structure and scope of this African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), some donor countries are maintaining pressure to influence its ultimate shape.

The concept of a peer review was originally suggested when NEPAD was first drawn up in 2001. But it was not until June 2002 that its broad outlines were established, and the following month that it was endorsed at the launch of the continent-wide African Union (AU). By early November, the first dozen African countries had pledged to participate. The NEPAD Implementation Committee, comprised of 20 African heads of state, is hoping to finalize work on the APRM at the end of February 2003.

The goal of the mechanism is to get African leaders to subject their governments to ongoing examination by other Africans in such priority areas as peace and security, democracy and political governance, and economic and corporate management. The UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has been given primary responsibility for working out objective indicators that can be used to actually measure governments' adherence to such standards.

Elections in Chad: The African Peer Review Mechanism will monitor standards of democracy, human rights and economic management

Innovation and uncertainty

As supporters of NEPAD point out, the mechanism is quite innovative. The European Union has not attempted to establish a political peer review process, nor has the industrialized countries' Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Within Africa, there are many uncertainties about the mechanism, among rights activists who think it is too limited and among leaders who prefer to avoid closer scrutiny. There is also widespread concern that donor countries will use participation — or a failure to participate — as a criterion in deciding aid allocations.

Canadian Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew heightened such concerns on 19 November, when he suggested during a visit to Johannesburg that countries that do not join the peer review may receive less aid from the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialized countries. According to Mr. Pettigrew, the $6 bn in additional annual aid that G-8 leaders have pledged to African countries over the next few years "is conditional on all NEPAD elements, of which good governance is a part, and peer review is part of that."

Voluntary self-monitoring

As agreed by the NEPAD Implementation Committee, the APRM will be a voluntary "self-monitoring" mechanism open to all AU member states. Its goal is to promote adoption of policies, standards and practices favouring political stability, economic growth, sustainable development and regional integration. A panel of eminent Africans "of high moral stature and demonstrated commitment to the ideals of pan-Africanism" will be nominated by participating countries and appointed by their heads of state. It will be supported by a secretariat, which in turn may draw on the services of African experts and institutions.

When a country asks to join the APRM, the secretariat will prepare an initial documentary review and send a team to that country to consult with government officials, political parties, parliamentarians, the media and civil society representatives. The government will have an opportunity to respond to the team's report, which is then submitted to African heads of state and key regional institutions, such as the political organs of the AU and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. Every two-four years another periodic review will take place, or earlier if there are signs of an impending political or economic crisis.

If a government shows a "demonstrable will" to correct shortcomings, says the APRM document, then other African governments will be urged to help it do so, and appeals will be made to donors for specific assistance. But if the will is not there, then participating African governments should "engage it in constructive dialogue." If dialogue fails, then other heads of state in the APRM may "put the government on notice of their collective intention to proceed with appropriate measures."

Some rush to join, others hold back

Ghana and Uganda were the first countries to ask to join the APRM, during a 19-20 October meeting of African ministers of finance, planning and economic development organized by the ECA in Johannesburg. A few weeks later,

during a meeting of the NEPAD Implementation Committee in Abuja, Nigeria, another 10 countries formally asked to join, among them Nigeria and South Africa. Representatives of several other countries signalled their willingness, but indicated their governments still had not completed their formal decision-making processes.

At the Johannesburg ministers' meeting, South African Finance Minister Trevor Manuel welcomed the early volunteers. He also noted that other African countries "are sceptical about peer review."

Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a former head of the UN Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Africa and a candidate for president in the 1998 Liberian elections, observed that some countries had raised concerns that the APRM could threaten sovereignty by allowing outsiders to pass judgment on national prerogatives. "I fail to see the logic of this concern," she said, "for all we are doing is a review of the progress and the results of those principles to which we have already committed."

Others, she said, "express concern that this mechanism will be used by the [non-African development] partners to punish those who fail to participate by the withdrawal of assistance. In my view, the harsh reality is that they can do so anyway under so many other disguises." In conjunction with the APRM, she added, the ECA should also elaborate indicators to review donor practices, "to judge the performance of our partners in NEPAD in terms of the level and timeliness of aid."

Some African human rights activists also have been critical of the APRM, but for different reasons. One weakness, said Mr. Peter Takirambudde, executive director of the African Division of Human Rights Watch, is that it is voluntary and that the political consequences for countries not joining are unclear. He also was concerned that the APRM document says that "different levels of development" will be taken into account in conducting the reviews. The APRM "should not endorse varying standards of good governance, respect for human rights and democracy under any circumstances." However, if the mechanism is implemented effectively, Mr. Takirambudde concluded, it would be "an unprecedented achievement for African integration, democracy and human rights." ■

Africans ponder New Partnership

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setting up gender task teams to ensure that poor women's concerns are addressed in national poverty reduction strategies.

ECA drew attention to the "promising innovation" of gender-based budgeting, a process already under way in South Africa and Tanzania, in which government budgets are analyzed according to how their spending allocations affect women (see *Africa Recovery*, April 2002). "Gender-responsive budgets," said the paper, "empower women's organizations and civil societies to hold public spending accountable to international and national commitments for promoting gender equality."

Rights and democracy

The New Partnership recognizes that Africa's development "is impossible in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance" and commits African leaders to promote those principles in their own countries and regionally. It envisages the establishment of a "peer review" mechanism through which Africans can monitor progress in this direction (see page 10).

Some African civil society associations regard the New Partnership's references to human rights and good governance as largely rhetorical. A "People's Forum" held in Bamako, Mali, in June, argued, in a declaration on NEPAD, that "the African elites who have embezzled money still enjoy impunity." Displaying little confidence in Africa's leaders to police themselves, the forum called for the establishment of international inquiries into such "ill-gotten gains" and for an international court to punish economic crimes.

However, many other pro-democracy activists and human rights advocates have welcomed the political aspects of NEPAD. Even some of those sceptical of the commitment of African leaders regard the document as a valuable lever for advancing those goals.

"NEPAD is essentially a programme for human rights," affirms Mr. Azzédine Abdel, president of the Algerian Human Rights Committee. The African Commission on Human and People's Rights, a pan-African organization headquartered in Banjul, Gambia, has held several sessions to examine NEPAD. Commission Chairman Kamel Rezag-Bara holds high hopes for the plan's "bold consensus on good governance, transparency, development and the rule of law."

At a February 2002 workshop on NEPAD in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, two human rights advocates from Kenya, Rev. Jephthah Gathaka and Prof. Smokin Wanjala, expressed concern that the New Partnership is essentially a declaration of principles put forth by the same "African political leadership that is largely responsible for the malaise that afflicts the continent." Nevertheless, they recognized that NEPAD is different from previous African initiatives in that, "for the first time, it acknowledges the fact that poor political leadership characterized by human rights violations, economic mismanagement, and corruption is the cause of the African problem."

As a way to hold African leaders accountable, the peer review mechanism in particular has drawn wide interest. Rights advocates have asked for assurances that government officials will not be the only ones to manage it. A NEPAD/civil society seminar in Addis Ababa in March recommended civil society participation in the peer review process, so that it is transparent and accessible. When the NEPAD Implementation Committee released a more detailed set of guidelines in June outlining the peer review's structure and processes, it explicitly stated that review teams, when visiting countries, should consult with "representatives of civil society organizations (including the media, academic, trade unions, business, professional bodies)."

Greater civil role

As the New Partnership as a whole moves closer to implementation, civil society involvement is likely to become more important across the plan's different priority areas. While the debates on NEPAD have so far been contradictory, Senegal's Minister for Parliamentary Relations Mamadou Diop Decroix noted at a seminar in late July, different sectors of the population each have a key responsibility for ensuring its success. At the same event, Mr. Bouba Diop, president of Senegal's main non-governmental coordinating body, stressed, "Citizen participation must animate and imbue the African renaissance process." ■

A new anti-poverty remedy for Africa?

Adjustment policies weaken PRSP goals, critics charge

By ***Gumisai Mutume***

At the end of the 1990s, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund announced a shift in the focus of their lending policies in Africa towards poverty reduction and invited public consultations to help define the strategy. Some hailed this as an innovative departure from the controversial macroeconomic policies the two institutions had previously emphasized in Africa.

"We welcome many, many of the changes they have brought about," UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Secretary-General Rubens Ricupero noted in September, at the launch of an UNCTAD study of the new Bank-IMF policies in Africa. "We think it is good to centre their attention on poverty reduction." The shift in focus also has received considerable support from the donor community. Aid agencies are increasingly channelling their assistance through Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), the policy documents that seek to translate the approach into country programmes and projects.

But, notes Mr. Ricupero, close examination of PRSPs shows that the new approach has "not changed substantially" from the structural adjustment policies promoted in Africa by the Bank and the Fund since the 1980s.

The two institutions themselves have conceded that both governments and non-governmental organizations believe that PRSPs are not a major departure from the past. A joint study they released in March, *A Review of the PRSP Approach*, acknowledges a view common among critics: that even though national governments prepare the papers, they contain elements that national officials know the international financial institutions want anyway. NGOs "argue that PRSPs incorporate structural adjustment policies that ... have consistently failed," notes the Bank-IMF review, "... and this reflects the pressures on governments to conform to the policy expectations of the Bank and Fund."

In theory, a PRSP is locally generated and "owned." A government, together with civil society organizations, prepares the document under World Bank and IMF supervision. The PRSP analyzes the causes, nature and incidence of poverty and defines how the country intends to reduce it, largely by increasing public spending on primary health care and basic education. Those programmes are mainly funded through savings on debt repayments under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, but they also depend on financing from other sectors of national budgets and from donors.

This new focus on poverty alleviation follows two decades of adjustment policies in Africa that saw greater economic growth in some countries, but also rising poverty. According to World Bank figures, the number of people earning less than a dollar a day rose from 217 million in 1987 to 291 million by 1998.

UN/DPI photo

Unemployed line up for jobs in Tanzania. Not many PRSPs explicitly address job creation.

Adjustment remains the focus

Largely in response to criticism of its policies, the IMF in 1999 announced its shift, symbolized by renaming its Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) as the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF). Around the same time, the World Bank introduced PRSPs, initially as the basis on which poor countries would receive debt relief under HIPC. Subsequently, the PRSP approach was extended to other low-income countries, and was turned into a condition to receive financial support from the Washington-based institutions. So far, 42 countries have completed either a full or an interim PRSP.

UNCTAD's study of African PRSPs, entitled *From Adjustment to Poverty Reduction: What Is New?*, concludes that not much has changed under the new approach. The two institutions have mainly built on conventional structural adjustment polices by adding two new elements:

- Paying more attention to the need for public spending on education and health, reversing the tendency of early adjustment policies to reduce such spending.
- Introducing "safety nets" and targeted spending programmes to mitigate the adverse impact of adjustment policies on the poor in education, health and rural infrastructure.

Although UNCTAD notes that the Washington institutions now realize that economic growth may not automatically trickle down to the poorest sectors of society, they are not recommending alternative macro-economic reforms. The Bank and the Fund still hold that structural adjustment policies are the necessary basis for sustained and rapid economic growth, the UNCTAD study argues. "What has not changed are the macro-economic policies," notes Mr Ricupero.

Mozambique's poverty reduction paper states that continued liberalization of foreign trade is a government priority in order to support rapid economic growth. In their PRSPs, Mauritania and Uganda intend to promote greater private sector participation in public services, which may jeopardize government subsidies for the

provision of such services to poor communities. Mauritania indicates that it will privatize electricity and telecommunications.

While some of the policies recommended in PRSPs might by themselves alleviate poverty, in many countries they are being implemented alongside other, sometimes conflicting, policies. The London-based Panos Institute argues that the likely impact of Uganda's PRSP will not be large, since the country has 20 other loans worth about $1 bn; these loans come with their own sets of conditions over which the PRSP has no influence. Those conditions, reports Panos, "are likely to undermine the achievement of the PRSP goals." One such loan stipulates water privatization, which could undermine PRSP health goals by placing access to water out of reach of those who cannot pay market rates.

School girls in Uganda: Improving education and health are central to poverty reduction

Pro-poor economic growth

Since many countries followed similar policy prescriptions before the advent of PRSPs — with little evident success — there is much debate about the wisdom of emphasizing economic growth through liberalization and rapid integration into the global economy.

In its PRSP review, UNCTAD argues that without massive, sustained capital injections into sub-Saharan Africa, high economic growth is not achievable. The agency notes that incomes in poor countries are too low to generate rapid economic growth and that many of these countries have no hope of attracting private capital unless they have mineral resources. Therefore, accelerating economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa would require a deliberate injection of at least an additional $10 bn annually for a decade.

And once economic growth is initiated, interventions to direct that growth towards poorer sections of African society would also be needed. "The key is the nature of growth," notes the African Learning Group on PRSPs, a forum of policymakers and experts organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa. Above all, the group says, the benefits of growth must be shared equitably, through strategies that are explicitly pro-poor. Since the majority of Africa's poor live in rural areas, the group argues, efforts to improve their conditions should emphasize rural development, enhanced agricultural productivity and job creation.

Significantly, many PRSPs do not contain explicit pro-poor growth strategies. The Save the Children organization found that out of 22 PRSPs it surveyed, only around a quarter stated that growth strategies should be pro-poor. Another non-governmental organization, World Vision, has argued that for growth to be pro-poor, deliberate measures to redistribute wealth are needed. One such measure, land reform, is "almost studiously avoided within most PRSPs." In some PRSPs, policies inherited from structural adjustment programmes, such as user fees for basic social services, are still being promoted despite their adverse impact on the poor.

The Bank and IMF, however, expect that the conditions of poor people will improve through increased government spending on sectors such as education, health and rural infrastructure, traditionally regarded as important for poverty reduction. According to an IMF study, average spending on poverty reduction was estimated to increase from 7.7 per cent of GDP to 10.2 per cent between 1999 and 2002 in a sample of seven countries that completed their PRSPs.

Another aspect missing in many PRSPs is the need for strategies to deal with the growing social and economic threat posed by HIV/AIDS. In at least 10 low-income countries, one-third of all adults carry the HIV virus. The Bank-IMF PRSP review notes that a number of early PRSPs "were not fully successful in capturing the seriousness of the threat, or the link between poverty and AIDS."

African governments acknowledge the shortcoming. A 19-20 October African ministers conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, declared that given the prominence of AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases as threats to African development, combating them must be part of the PRSP process.

Democratizing policy-making

The Bank and the Fund maintain that opening up the process to public debate and scrutiny is one of the major strengths of the PRSP approach. World Bank President James Wolfensohn says that while the process has not always worked perfectly, "there is strong evidence that it has created space for previously excluded voices."

Mr. Zie Gariyo of the Uganda Debt Network agrees that such consultations are a significant aspect of PRSPs. "The prescription of partnership between government and civil society is novel," he notes. "The majority of states have never regarded civil society as a stakeholder."

The Uganda Debt Network was the leading agency for civil society participation in the country's PRSP, which is often hailed by the Bank as a model. Uganda has an advantage over many other African countries, Mr. Gariyo believes, because the government had previously developed its own Poverty Eradication Action Plan through dialogue with civil society groups. That plan was then reformulated as a PRSP. A Civil Society Task Force, already set up under the earlier plan, consulted citizens, organized workshops, seminars, radio and television programmes and distributed policy briefs through the print media. Later, community representatives met to discuss the draft PRSP and make further recommendations.

"The significant point to note is that civil society inputs were sometimes wholly incorporated into the draft," says Mr. Gariyo. One such input was the call for greater emphasis on employment creation, which was missing in the initial draft version of the document — a common absence in many African PRSPs.

Thanks to the dialogue in Uganda, explicit measures for job creation were included in the agreed document.

Mr. Gariyo notes that the government provided considerable information and did not try to dictate the agenda of the civil society consultations. A Poverty Action Fund has been set up to channel debt savings and donor funds into programmes identified in the PRSP. Civil society groups will monitor the fund.

In Uganda, civil society groups also supported the government in opposing the traditional donor practice of directly funding projects in sectors of their choice. Development planners said this directed too much funding into certain areas at the expense of others. Together, the government and civil society groups prevailed on the donors to place their money into a general government budget for allocation to deserving under-funded areas.

However, Mr. Gariyo notes that this close cooperation did not extend to the preparation of the final version of the PRSP that the government presented to the Bank and IMF for approval. Civil society groups felt excluded from that stage.

Much more needs to be done

In many other African countries, the consultation process is only beginning or is fraught with greater difficulties. The PRSP Monitoring and Synthesis Project of the UK's Department for International Development notes that PRSPs often equate decentralization of government with greater and better participation. Yet in many countries, the institutional framework to allow local participation is lacking and there are no explicit links with local government.

Although parliament is theoretically the highest policy-making organ, the contribution of members of parliament in the development of Kenya's PRSP was disappointing, according to the non-governmental Action Aid. More than 60,000 Kenyans attended countrywide workshops and seminars during the formulation of the PRSP. But the big majority of MPs claimed to have other engagements even when the consultations were taking place in their own constituencies.

Ensuring that the PRSP process always includes civil society is difficult, especially in countries where the authorities perceive NGOs as being anti-government and put up barriers to their participation. In other cases, grassroots movements do not regard some civil society organizations as their genuine representatives, since they are either urban-based or driven by non-governmental groups from abroad.

In some countries, NGOs are frustrated because they do not view the PRSP as an opportunity to debate the underlying macroeconomic framework. The call for participation implies debate at both macro- and microeconomic levels, but the Panos Institute notes that the Bank and IMF "appear for whatever reasons, not to be open to debate on the macroeconomic issues."

In many cases, charges Ghanaian economist and activist Mr. Charles Abugre, participation of civil society in economic policy-making is strictly limited, and at times is used to endorse Bank and IMF policies and create an impression that NGOs support them.

"Sometimes the IMF and World Bank make all the important lending decisions for a government before a PRSP is finalized," says Mr. Abugre. A case in point is Tanzania. Its PRSP was submitted to the two institutions in November 2000, months after the country's lending programme already had been approved. "We wonder what purpose the full PRSP will serve in Tanzania," notes Mr Abugre.

Listening to the poor?

In 1999, World Bank researchers conducted interviews with 20,000 poor people in 23 countries to seek their views on poverty and learn about their problems and priorities. The Bank hoped that the study, *Voices of the Poor: Crying Out for Change*, would assist it to gain a deeper understanding of poverty and to refocus its policies on the needs of the poor.

UNCTAD's comparison between the demands of poor people in that report and some of the policy objectives in PRSPs show significant differences. Poor people told the Bank that they needed all school expenses lowered, but PRSPs typically call for reducing or eliminating primary school fees only, while recommending user fees at higher levels. The poor tend to oppose massive privatizations and challenge some of the practices of big business, while PRSPs endorse private sector-led development. The poor generally support land redistribution, lowering land rents and subsidizing basic inputs; they often oppose dismantling government-run cooperatives. But PRSPs push for the development of land markets and the elimination of marketing boards and subsidies. UNCTAD notes that in such areas, the preferences of the international financial institutions and national governments tend to prevail over those of the poor.

Despite the criticisms, PRSPs have generated a "welcome focus by policymakers" on the needs of the poor, says UN Development Programme Administrator Mark Malloch Brown. He adds, however, that the "overall process was in most cases overly concentrated on narrow economic issues."

The Bank and Fund emphasize that PRSPs are still in the early stages of implementation and that there is room for countries to improve both their content and their consultation mechanisms. "This is a long-term process," they note. "Quality will gradually have to improve over time." ■

PRSPs in funding dilemma

Faced with declining aid and unfavourable trade terms that erode the earning power of major African exports, many countries are expected to encounter financing shortfalls for poverty reduction. This creates problems in planning PRSP targets, making it difficult to predict the availability of financial resources. In their recent review of PRSPs, the Bank and IMF were critical of the first completed PRSPs, noting that none of them included contingencies in the event of financing shortfalls. "The presentation of a set of priority actions that are not yet fully financed and without contingency plans is a risk to the achievement of poverty reduction objectives," notes the Bank/IMF review.

Some observers charge that the amount of debt payments that will be saved under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative will be smaller than predicted, hampering spending for poverty alleviation. The level of these savings are determined on the basis of uncertain projections about economic growth and export earnings, especially since world prices have been falling for primary commodities, which account for the bulk of sub-Saharan African exports.

Even though most PRSPs depend on money saved from debt repayments, they also draw money from the general government budget. Financing problems are exacerbated when these budgets are highly dependent on external sources of funding, notes the African Learning Group on PRSPs, reporting that in Uganda's case, about 53 per cent of the budget comes from external loans and grants. Because such high levels of donor financing are often not sustained, governments are obliged to constantly revise their PRSP targets.

Women struggle for a seat at the peace table

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They sang together for hours before making their separate,dangerous ways back home. And although the war continued, something important had changed. The road that divided them now connected them, and through their local peace group, Iwishakira amahoro ("we want to have peace"), the women of the villages have worked to keep the connection strong.

This is just one of many examples of African women acting locally, often spontaneously, to assist the victims of war and reach across battle lines in pursuit of peace. It is peacemaking at the village level, where Africa's increasingly internal conflicts are fought, and often the first step towards reconciliation in communities shattered by the hatred and devastation of war.

But the contributions of women peacemakers in Africa, from Somalia to South Africa, have gone largely unnoticed. Dismissed by governments and rebel movements who consider making war and peace to be men's work — and often relegated to the role of "victim" by well-intentioned diplomats and aid agencies — women have had to fight their own battles for a seat at the peace table. "Women have played a leadership role in the cause of peace," UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer told the UN Security Council last year. "But their efforts have not been recognized, supported or rewarded."

Those efforts received a major boost on 31 October 2000, when the Council adopted Resolution 1325, formally recognizing women's special vulnerability during wartime, and calling for their "equal participation and full involvement" in peacemaking (see page 19). Writing on the second anniversary of the resolution, former Liberian Finance Minister Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the former Defence Minister of Finland, Ms. Elisabeth Rehn, described 1325 as a "watershed political framework" for women engaged in peace and security work. "Even in the most unlikely of places women are organizing on the basis of Resolution 1325," they continued. "It has given legitimacy to a long history of women's peace activity."*

* Progress of the World's Women 2002, Vol. 1, Women, War, Peace. The Independent Experts' Assessment, *by Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Available online at: <http://www.unifem.org/resources/assessment/index.html>. Hard copies are available by e-mail request only from the UN Development Fund for Women at: <unifem@undp.org>*

But if Resolution 1325 has strengthened African women's claims to a seat at the peace table, it has not removed the formidable political, cultural and economic obstacles to their full participation as peacemakers or as citizens. The recent experiences of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in the Mano River Union (MRU) countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, illustrate the barriers women still face in making their voices heard, and how they have organized to overcome them.

Congolese women seize an opportunity

Despite determined efforts by women in the DRC to participate in diplomatic initiatives aimed at ending the country's devastating conflict, they were almost entirely excluded from negotiations leading up to the 1999 Lusaka peace agreement and the implementation talks that followed. It was not until late January 2002, with talks between the parties set to open in Sun City, South Africa, that the Congolese government and its rebel adversaries, at the urging of the UN and the mediator, former Botswanan President Sir Ketumile Masire, agreed to add a few more women to their delegations. It was the slimmest of openings, but the women resolved to take full advantage.

UNIFEM Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer: "Women have played a leadership role in the cause of peace. But their efforts have not been recognized, supported or rewarded."

On 15 February women from across the DRC, including representatives from the warring parties, government and civil society, gathered in Nairobi under the auspices of UNIFEM and a Geneva-based non-governmental organization, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) to forge a common position in advance of the negotiations, known as the Inter-Congolese Dialogue. "We knew that we had to be together for the men to hear what we had to say," Ms. Aningina Bibiane, a Congolese peace activist, told *Africa Recovery*. During four years of fighting "there have been a lot of killings and rapes and other human rights violations among civilians, particularly women and children.... Women are the principal victims. That is why we had to stand up."

During four days of debate the women found that, however deep their differences, they shared an overriding desire for peace, a broad commitment to the Lusaka accord and, significantly, a common determination to remove constitutional and legislative obstacles to women's equality after the war. On 19 February, with advice from a respected African "wise woman," former Liberian President Ruth Perry, the delegates issued a joint declaration and programme of action calling for an immediate cease-fire, the inclusion of women and their concerns in all aspects of the peace process, and adoption of a 30 per cent quota for women at all levels of government in any final settlement. The women also announced the formation of a pan-Congolese women's caucus in Sun City to support the peace process and lobby for their full participation.

But with only 40 women among 340 delegates to the formal talks, an early challenge for the women was to find ways to increase their influence. Numbers are important, explained Ms. Bineta Diop, FAS president and secretary-general of the African Women Committee on Peace and Development, a pan-African body established by the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa. Without a critical mass of women at the table, "they are just like a toy in the men's structure. If there is one woman among 30 men who have a different agenda, how can that woman deliver?" In any case, she noted, the mere presence of a woman does not guarantee that she will represent the interests of

women generally. "But when you have a group of women you will see them acting differently — as women together. You will also see the men acting differently, because the process is no longer male-dominated."

Speaking as 'sisters and mothers'

To strengthen the caucus, therefore, an additional 33 women, including Ms. Diop, Mrs. Perry, Ms. Bibiane and other representatives of Congolese civil society, joined the women's caucus as advisers. Although excluded from the formal discussions, Ms. Bibiane noted, the advisers played important

roles in supporting the women delegates and acting as the eyes and ears of ordinary people back home. "We used a strong press strategy to keep pressure on the parties and inform the Congolese people of what was happening. We prepared technical documents and position papers for the women delegates to use in the meetings, and met with the delegation leaders to try to be part of the decision making."

The presence of caucus members in the deliberations allowed the women to closely monitor progress and adjust their tactics to respond to deadlocks and new developments. When disputes threatened cancellation of the negotiations, Ms. Diop recalled, the women threatened to denounce the parties back home. "They told the men that if they went home without peace the people would beat them," she laughed. "The men knew the women were in touch with the grassroots."

They also made sure the men knew the women were watching. As negotiators entered the conference hall each morning they were greeted by groups of women who called them by name and handed them the "thought of the day."

a photocopied sheet with a Congolese proverb or slogan selected to respond to the issues under discussion. The handouts ranged from such gentle generalities as *J'aime le Congo* ("I love the Congo") to demands for progress on specific issues, but they all served to remind the parties of the expectations back home.

In general, the caucus chose to avoid confrontations with the men — a tactical decision dictated by its small numbers and its ad-hoc and informal status. If the caucus was to have an impact on the process, it was necessary to establish and maintain good relations with the men, who resented actions that appeared to challenge traditional gender roles and who had only reluctantly agreed to the modest increase in female delegates.

> *Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf: "Women are more concerned about people. They are in the homes carrying the burden of the home and the family." From that experience, women bring a sensibility, a sensitivity, to those things which bring peace."*

"At first, the men were hostile," Ms. Bibiane acknowledged, "because there was this group of women entering 'their' space. But we approached them in a way that made them feel secure. In African culture the woman is your mother. The woman is your wife and sister. If your mother or sister is talking to you, you have to listen. ... We didn't demonize the men or try to take their place."

Tradition and culture

The women found creative ways to use tradition and culture to enhance their influence. On 8 March, International Women's Day, the caucus was invited to address a plenary meeting of the formal talks. Instead of giving a speech, the women staged a play that dramatized the suffering of women and children in war and concluded with an impassioned appeal for peace. The performance was effective, Ms. Diop said, precisely because it presented the women in familiar roles. "Even the toughest rebels were crying and asking, 'How can the women see us like this? Are the women really suffering this much?'" It showed the men that women were not pursuing partisan political objectives, she noted, but instead expressed the broad public desire for peace.

In the end, however, final agreement eluded the parties at Sun City despite progress on many issues. As the meeting adjourned, the women's caucus blocked the doorway and announced to reporters that delegates would have to remain in the meeting hall until peace was agreed. It was a short-lived gesture of civil disobedience, but demonstrated the willingness of the women to use more aggressive tactics and step outside traditional roles when circumstances required.

Are women better peacemakers?

Are women naturally more peaceful than men, and therefore better peacemakers? Not necessarily, three experts told *Africa Recovery* — but societal gender roles and the different experiences men and women have as a result can contribute to women's effectiveness at the negotiating table. One important difference between men and women, says Ms. Bineta Diop, president of the non-governmental organization Femme Africa Solidarite, is that while men are accustomed to wielding authority, women are, of necessity, better at compromise and consensus-building. "In our society, in Africa, you will see the women working together for health care and education and food. They are the ones taking care of the community, and they bring those values of solidarity, of listening, to the [peace] table.... They bring the men around to those issues."

Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, co-author of the independent experts' assessment on women, war and peace for UNIFEM, noted that while men seek political power in order to rule, women are generally excluded from ruling circles and see power as a means to other ends, rather than an end in itself. "Women are more concerned about people. They are mothers. They grow up with children. They are in the homes carrying the burden of the home and family." From that experience, she said, "women bring a sensibility, a sensitivity, to those things which bring peace."

It is not that women do not want full participation in the political process, added UNIFEM Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer. "They do! Women want power as much as men. But it's power for what? They are having such difficulties raising their families and bringing up the children that they want a better and safer way. You can't do that without resources, without authority, without power."

Women march for peace in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. "What women want, God wants. Congolese mothers want peace."

"Once the women got [to Sun City] the nature of the dialogue changed," Ms. Heyzer told *Africa Recovery*. "They were able to break through many of the deadlocks that [the men] otherwise could not." Support from the UN and the international community, she said, was vital to their success. "UNIFEM was the broker. If we hadn't gotten involved [the women's caucus] could not have happened." UNIFEM provided travel and accommodation for the women's caucus and ensured that all parties to the talks were familiar with the requirements of Resolution 1325. "Then we worked to be sure that the women were prepared."

'We didn't have the resources'

It was not until 17 December that a comprehensive power-sharing agreement between the Congolese parties was finally reached. The severe shortage of funds, and continuing resistance to their participation, however, meant that only 10 women were able to attend the follow-up meetings in South Africa in November and December.

Although the group members were selected for their expertise in the issues under discussion, their role was largely symbolic — limited to private meetings with the delegation heads and public prayers for peace. "The problem was that we didn't have resources," Ms. Bibiane explained. "Although UNIFEM and the UN Development Programme have been able to help us, [after Sun City] we didn't have the resources to be together and strategize."

At one follow-up meeting, she noted, the delegations included only four women among 80 men, although UNIFEM was able to provide training and support for women's peace activities inside the country.

Mano River initiative

Women peace activists in the troubled Mano River basin countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone have also had to struggle to be heard. Since at least the beginning of the Liberian civil war in 1989, Liberian women have organized to assist the victims and encourage national and regional peace initiatives. In 1994 a number of women's religious and development organizations launched the Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace, organizing protests against the country's deepening civil conflict and advocating for women's rights. Notably, one of their leaders, Mrs. Perry, was named to head Liberia's transitional government in 1996.

In 2000, explained Ms. Mary Brownell, a veteran Liberian peace activist, women from the two countries met in Abuja, Nigeria, at the invitation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and, together with their counterparts from Guinea, launched a regional women's peace movement, the Mano River Union Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET).

The countries "are so interwoven," Ms. Brownell noted. "Once there is no peace in Liberia, there will be no peace in Sierra Leone. When there is fighting in Guinea, there has to be fighting in Liberia. That is why we had to be in touch as women."

The network got off to a fast start, delivering a women's peace appeal to the feared Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone and addressing an MRU heads of state summit within a week of its launch. The organization also initiated a recruiting drive to increase the membership and effectiveness of its national affiliates. In recognition of their efforts, the women were given delegate status at the 24th ECOWAS summit that December and addressed the leaders about the importance of supporting

Casamance women march for peace

For two decades, Senegal's southern region of Casamance has been afflicted by war, as government forces have tried to contain a persistent armed insurgency. Pro-peace sentiments have been growing among ordinary Casamançais, and women have played a prominent role in organizing meetings, rallies and marches in Ziguinchor and other towns to demand that both the government and the rebel Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC) commence serious peace talks.

On 27 October, some 3,000 women marched through Ziguinchor. They stopped in front of the offices of the regional governor and those of the main MFDC leaders and extracted new pledges to work towards a comprehensive peace settlement. Many of the women were "guardians" of Casamance's sacred forests, where social disputes have traditionally been resolved according to local custom. Highly respected in rural communities and organized in an association called Kabonkétor ("reconciliation," in the local Joola language), these guardians have subsequently been travelling throughout Casamance to help mobilize support for the peace movement. "We don't want to keep on losing our children," explained Ms. Marguerite Coly.

women's peacemaking programmes.

But it was MARWOPNET's initiative to mediate the escalating conflict between Liberia and Guinea in 2001 that demonstrated the potential of women's peacemaking efforts in Africa. It also highlighted the limits to their effectiveness, due to scarce resources and their exclusion from the formal peace process.

At that time, relations between the MRU countries were extremely tense. Liberian President Charles Taylor had expelled the Sierra Leonean and Guinean ambassadors. This move came amid charges that Liberia was aiding the RUF rebels in Sierra Leone and that Guinea was supporting Liberian rebels opposed to Mr. Taylor along the border between the two countries, an allegation vehemently denied by Guinean President Lansana Conté.

Despite urgent diplomatic efforts by ECOWAS and the then Organization of African Unity, the acrimony blocked arrangement of a presidential summit. "There was a lot of hatred and animosity between the three presidents," Ms. Brownell told *Africa Recovery*, "especially between Presidents Taylor and Conté. President Conté said he would never sit with Charles Taylor."

In response, MARWOPNET dispatched a women's leadership delegation, including Ms. Brownell and Mrs. Perry, to all three countries to appeal for an urgent meeting of the feuding heads of state. When Mr. Taylor was informed that the delegation was waiting to see him, he is reported to have said in surprise, "Are you telling me that women leaders from Guinea are here in Monrovia? And women from Sierra Leone? How have the Liberian women managed to bring them here?" He agreed to meet the group and added, "they are very courageous."

The only way to ensure that African women become equal partners in peace is to support their struggles for full participation in national political, economic and social life.

The 'key' to peace

At that meeting and in meetings with Mr. Conté and Sierra Leonean President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, MARWOPNET decided to take maximum advantage of the limited political space open to women. The leaders, Ms. Brownell said, "know they have to listen because the women are not for war and know that we don't want anything from them except peace." After listening to the women, Mr. Taylor agreed to recall the Guinean and Sierra Leonean ambassadors and to participate in a regional peace summit. "The women in the Mano River network have the respect of the people," Ms. Brownell asserted. "So when we make a move, I think the leaders respect us."

The next stop was Conakry to meet with President Conté. In keeping with their strategy with Mr. Taylor, the MARWOPNET delegation focused on the human suffering caused by the war and the overriding need for peace. But with Mr. Conté still adamant that he would not meet directly with the Liberian leader, a change of tactics was needed. One of the group's elder stateswomen, Ms. Brownell, provided it. She told Mr. Conté, "You and President Taylor have to meet as men and iron out your differences, and we the women want to be present. We will lock you in this room until you come to your senses, and I will sit on the key."

When her comments were translated into French for Mr. Conté, there was a long silence. "Then he started laughing," she recalled. "He couldn't believe it! Finally he stopped laughing and said, 'What man do you think would say that to me? Only a woman could do such a thing and get by with it.'" In the end, Mr. Conté agreed to attend the summit, and he credited the women for changing his mind. "Many people have tried to convince me to meet with President Taylor," he said as the delegation left. "Your commitment and your appeal have convinced me."

For African women, the road to fuller involvement in peacemaking efforts is still a long one.

It was a major diplomatic achievement for MARWOPNET — one that regional and international mediators had tried for months to reach without success. But when the three presidents met in Morocco in March 2002, MARWOPNET was absent — a victim of political marginalization and a severe shortfall in resources. "They only told us on a Thursday, when everyone was leaving for Rabat on Saturday," Ms. Brownell said. "We don't have money, so there was nothing we could do."

But the greater problem, she observed, was "the male mentality that says women are not supposed to be involved in these things. They will meet with you and say they appreciate our efforts and promise all the cooperation. But we don't see them doing that. They want to give us only observer status, and that is what we cannot accept."

Looking ahead

In the short term, argue Ms. Rehn and Ms. Johnson Sirleaf, mechanisms such as trust

funds and requirements for gender balance in formal peace processes, combined with expanded training and capacity-building programmes, should be established to ensure that a "critical mass" of women take their seats at the table.

But the only way to ensure that African women become equal partners in peace, they conclude, is to support their struggles for full participation in national political, economic and social life. In the face of entrenched discrimination, they assert, controversial measures to increase opportunities for women, including quotas for women in parliament and the civil service, should be supported "as a first step on the path to gender equality." But such policies "cannot replace long-term strategies to address the socio-economic constraints" that keep women out of the political and economic mainstream.

Invest in women

The key lesson to be learned from women's peacemaking efforts so far, Ms. Heyzer said, is that much greater political and financial capital must be invested in them. "UNIFEM has been supporting these initiatives but … we are just a small women's fund." African women can be doubly disadvantaged, she continued, because "some conflicts get more international attention than others, and therefore have more resources."

The return on that investment can be enormous, she asserted. "Unless men are pressured to change, they are still going to have that military mindset." With women at the table, she said, "the peacemakers no longer see security from a strictly military perspective, but from a human security perspective — including education, health care and economic development. These things must be factored into the negotiations if there is to be real peace."

For African women, Ms. Heyzer continued, the end of conflict and the urgent demands of reconstruction can create opportunities for change. "Many post-conflict countries realize they cannot do without their women," she noted. "At the end of the day many women are willing to break out of the old boundaries in order to build a secure future."

Resolution 1325 has helped open the door to that future, Ms. Heyzer concluded, by recognizing women's suffering in war and their contributions to peace. But on the difficult road from battle-scarred Busoro and Musaga to an equal place at the conference table, women peacemakers in Africa — and around the world — still have a long way to go. ■

Annan urges increasing women in UN peace operations

Noting that, "the differential impact of conflict on women and girls calls for specific responses from the international community," UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has unveiled a score of recommendations to strengthen the legal protection and physical security of women in conflict situations, and expand their roles in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations. If adopted, the proposals, presented to the Security Council on 16 October, could produce sweeping changes in UN peacekeeping missions and greatly increase the number of women in leadership positions. The recommendations are intended to implement the Council's landmark October 2000 Resolution 1325, which recognized both women's special vulnerability in wartime and their ability to contribute to the maintenance and promotion of peace (see *Africa Recovery*, January 2001).

Mr. Annan welcomed the expansion of international law to include rape, forced prostitution and trafficking in women and girls as war crimes and crimes against humanity. The presence of gender advisers and gender affairs units in some recent peacekeeping operations, including those in Sierra Leone, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Timor-Leste, he said, had strengthened the effectiveness of those missions. But he reminded the Council that despite the authorization of more than 50 peacekeeping missions since the UN's inception, "none have included a commitment to gender equality as part of a mission's mandate."

Key recommendations include:

- Explicit Security Council condemnation of sexual violence and other crimes against women and girls and demands that parties to conflicts act to prevent such crimes.
- Exclusion of crimes against women from amnesty provisions of peace agreements and prosecution of such crimes by ad-hoc judicial tribunals.
- Inclusion of women in formal national and international peace processes and measures to ensure that UN-brokered peace agreements systematically address women's needs and priorities in the post-conflict era.
- Incorporation of gender perspectives in all peacekeeping mandates and adequate staffing and funding of gender activities.
- Vastly expanded training for all peacekeeping personnel on gender and women's rights, and strengthened disciplinary procedures to end sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers.
- Involvement of national and community-based women's organizations in the design and delivery of humanitarian assistance and free access to vulnerable women and girls by international humanitarian and human rights organizations.
- Inclusion of women and child ex-combatants, "camp followers" and families in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and development of programmes to respond to conflict-related domestic violence.
- Identification of legal and social barriers to women's education and employment opportunities, action to address those barriers and steps to ensure that women are involved at all levels in reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes.

Room for improvement

Mr. Annan readily conceded that there is much room for improvement in the participation of women in UN peace operations, from appointment of women heads of mission to deployment of women as peacekeeping soldiers and civil police. He acknowledged that just one woman currently serves as a head of mission or special representative, and only five have ever held such a position. Mr. Annan pledged to set "concrete targets" to achieve gender parity in the number of special representatives and special envoys by 2015 and urged countries contributing troops and civilian personnel to peacekeeping missions to step up recruitment of women.

According to a report by two independent experts, former Finnish Defence Minister Elisabeth Rehn and former Liberian Finance Minister Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, women comprised only 0.1 per cent of UN military peacekeeping personnel between 1957 and 1989. In 2000, they made up just 3 per cent of military and 4 per cent of police personnel in peacekeeping missions. The problem is not a shortage of qualified women, they argued, but an "old boys network" that discriminates against women and mistakenly sees peacekeeping as fundamentally a military operation. "Contemporary peacekeeping requires skills that can lead a war-torn society through a process of nation-building, economic development and reconstruction." With those skills, they concluded, women and men are equally endowed.

Famine in Africa

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inadequate and erratic rainfall, estimate that some 11.3 million people require more than 1.4 mn tonnes of food aid through mid-2003, with another 3 million in need of close monitoring (out of a total population of 67 million). A joint UN-Ethiopian appeal, issued on 7 December, warned that the crisis could reach the magnitude of Ethiopia's 1984-85 famine, which claimed around 1 million lives.

A subsequent FEWS assessment noted that conditions may actually be worse than in Ethiopia's last major famine. Some 3-5 million poor rural Ethiopians are chronically unable to feed themselves, even in good years. Many others have very low household grain stocks, following previous poor harvests. As a result, many more people now need food aid than in 1984-85, when 8 million required relief. As elsewhere in Africa, notes the FEWS report, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS is increasing destitution, lowering labour productivity and eroding traditional coping mechanisms.

Ethiopia's high external debt of around $6 bn also hampers commercial food imports, requiring annual debt servicing payments of more than $160 mn. In addition, private commercial creditors are demanding some $500 mn from Ethiopia, much of it for businesses nationalized under the previous military regime. "Whether these claims are legally right or wrong, Ethiopia can't afford to pay," argues Mr. Justin Forsyth, head of policy for Oxfam, which has joined with other non-governmental organizations to press for greater debt relief to help the country through its emergency.

On top of these problems, the UN-Ethiopia appeal observed that "a drop in the international price of Ethiopia's main cash crop — coffee — has reduced the government's ability to provide additional cash resources to the crisis."

Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, while announcing the joint emergency appeal, emphasized the importance of tackling such fundamental deficiencies "not after the emergency has passed, but in conjunction with addressing the emergency. We need to develop strategies to fight poverty, which is at the root of the problem."

'Stark reality' in Eritrea

In neighbouring Eritrea, an estimated 1 million people need emergency food aid, nearly a third of its total population of 3.3 million. Again, the most immediate factor is a severe, prolonged drought, the worst since the country gained its independence from Ethiopia in 1993. There has been a near-total crop failure in Barentu, which normally produces about 80 per cent of the country's sorghum, Eritrea's staple cereal. WFP officials in Asmara, the Eritrean capital, report that child malnutrition and school dropout rates are increasing, and that in some districts up to one-fifth of the livestock has already died.

In October, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Kenzo Oshima toured camps for internally displaced people who cannot return home because their land has been mined or their homes were destroyed during Eritrea's recent war with Ethiopia. "Right now, Eritreans need to commit many of their resources to coping with the residual effects of war, but can't because of the drought." Therefore, he said, food aid must be complemented by programmes for post-war reconstruction, the safe return of refugees and internally displaced people, the removal of landmines and poverty reduction. "If issues like these are not addressed, we may well find ourselves with a similar emergency on our hands in a few years," Mr. Oshima warned.

In November, the UN issued a $163 mn relief and rehabilitation appeal for Eritrea, to cover the country's projected needs in 2003. Some $56 mn of that amount would be earmarked for repatriation, landmine removal, shelter, health, education, water, HIV/AIDS and other programmes. Fulfilling those needs may be an uphill struggle, however. As of late December, only a bare $9 mn had been pledged towards the request for $105 mn in food aid — usually the portion of an appeal that donors are most willing to support.

"The prospect of thousands starving is a stark reality," commented Mr. Patrick Buckley, the WFP's representative in Asmara. "Ships carrying food aid from abroad take months to arrive — considering the magnitude of the crisis at hand, each day is critical."

War, and more war

Conflict has been a major factor in a number of Africa's other emergencies. In neighbouring Sudan, two decades of civil war have left some 2.9 million Sudanese dependent on food aid. If an October 2002 agreement between the government and the main southern rebel group leads to a cease-fire, then a "new chapter" could open up for humanitarian assistance in Sudan, says Mr. Oshima, by making it possible for relief agencies to reach previously inaccessible groups of people. This, in turn, will raise aid requirements further.

WFP Executive Director James Morris visiting famine-stricken Southern Africa.

WFP photo by Paul Smith

In Central Africa, where drought generally has not been a factor, large groups of refugees or internally displaced people also need relief aid, including in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and Congo Republic.

In West Africa, there are two clusters of countries afflicted by famine, for distinctly different reasons. Five countries in the arid Sahel zone (Cape Verde, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal) have a combined total of more than half a million people suffering from the effects of drought. The WFP estimates that another 791,000, mainly refugees and internally displaced people, require emergency food aid in four countries along the southwestern coast that have been mired in conflict: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire.

This, however, may underestimate the full impact of the Ivorian crisis, which erupted suddenly and massively into virtual civil war in

September. According to an interagency "flash appeal" issued by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in late November, there may be as many as 1.5 million internally displaced people in Côte d'Ivoire, plus another 1.2 million "war affected" Ivorians. These figures do not count foreign residents (mainly from Burkina Faso and Mali) who had to be evacuated back home or refugees who had previously fled to Côte d'Ivoire because of conflicts in their own countries (mainly Liberia and Sierra Leone). If all categories of people affected by conflict in Côte d'Ivoire and its neighbours are included, OCHA estimates that the total could well surpass 4 million, although not everyone would require international food aid.

Mobilizing opinion

The escalation of emergency relief needs in Africa comes at a time of increasing difficulty in securing the necessary funds and food aid. The WFP's director, Mr. Morris, notes that in the 1980s the agency was able to devote three-quarters of its operations to long-term agricultural development programmes. But as donors pulled back from financing such activities — and the number of conflicts in Africa proliferated — the emphasis shifted largely to emergency relief, which now accounts for about 80 per cent of the WFP's budget.

Yet, Mr. Morris adds, funding for such relief operations has itself been declining. Out of a total budget of $1.4 bn for the agency's activities in Africa over the next year, only about half was pledged as of early December. By the end of the month, new donations from Japan, Germany, Canada and the African Development Bank brought the response to the agency's Southern Africa appeal (excluding Angola) to $317 mn, but this was still a third short of the region's total requirement through March 2003.

With the goal of stimulating greater international solidarity with Africa, the WFP has been working with other relief agencies and NGOs to highlight the continent's critical food situation. In early December, the WFP, US Agency for International Development and 15 US humanitarian relief organizations met in Baltimore. They launched a global campaign to help the millions of Africans today facing famine. "We appeal to governments, citizens' groups, private voluntary organizations, religious institutions and individual citizens to recognize the enormity of the crisis confronting Africa and to join in a massive and urgent response."

The WFP's "Africa Hunger Alert," launched on 16 December, is only part of that campaign. A concert, dedicated to the African famine and attended by 1,200 people, was held in Tokyo on 9 December. Colleges and secondary and primary schools in Ontario, Canada, the US state of Montana and other locations have organized vigils, fasts and similar actions to generate support for Africa. Lobbying efforts have been launched in Hong Kong to press local governments to contribute to famine relief.

At the moment, these are isolated expressions of concern, notes the WFP's Mr. Graisse. But he expects them to intensify and spread as the scale of the African crisis becomes more apparent. "If we are to avert starvation in Africa, ordinary citizens have an important role to play," says Mr. Graisse. "It's critical they join the campaign and urge their governments to address the needs of the hungry now before it is too late." ■

Food distribution in Ethiopia.

'GM' controversy

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"I will not allow Zambians to be turned into guinea pigs no matter the levels of hunger in the country."

Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives Mundia Sikatana said in similar terms: "We will get good food for our people, food that we can guarantee is good. We should not be bulldozed into accepting what we do not want."

Zambian opinion is not entirely united on this issue, however. Some opposition politicians and non-governmental organizations say that the immediate concern should be averting hunger. They also note that Zambians have already been eating GM foods which have been imported from South Africa and are available on supermarket shelves throughout the country.

'The pain is real'

Despite the controversy, the WFP has continued to offer GM food aid to countries in need. "As long as food aid is certified as safe by the donor country and is acceptable to the recipient country," it says, "then WFP will distribute the food."

The agency notes that it has been distributing GM food aid elsewhere for some time, and in Southern Africa itself since 1992/93, with no reports of deaths or health concerns.

With some 2.9 million Zambians facing famine conditions, the WFP implored President Mwanawasa to reconsider his position, explaining that the rejection of GM food would narrow the pool of available relief resources and possibly lead to breaks in the food pipeline.

"The pain of the people is real," emphasized Mr. Richard Regan, head of the local WFP office, during the launch of the UN's $71.4 mn emergency food aid appeal for Zambia. "We need to start moving now, and in an effective way."

Some participants in the debate over GM food aid note that the issue goes beyond the best way of providing short-term emergency relief. The international community, they say, should start paying greater attention to agricultural development, to ensure Africa's long-term food security. Says Genetic Resources Action International (GRAIN), an international non-governmental organization promoting sustainable management and use of agriculture biodiversity: "The issue is not whether a few sacks of GM maize are going to make people in Southern Africa keel over and die, but whether the international community is really bent on helping African farmers support their families, their communities and their integrity." ■

AFRICA AGENDA

3-7 February 2003, Guatemala City (Guatemala) — International Conference on the Contribution of Criteria and Indicators to Sustainable Forest Management. Contact Glenda Lee, tel (502) 379-9830, e-mail <cici2002@inab.gob.gt>.

3-11 February 2003, Yaounde (Cameroon) — African Regional Training Workshop on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights. Tel (237) 221-0262/753-0904, fax (237) 220-9788, e-mail <yaounde2003@hotmail.com>.

4-7 February 2003, Johannesburg (South Africa) — African Women's Health Conference 2003. E-mail conference@amanitare.org, website <www.amanitare.org>.

13-15 February 2003, Copenhagen (Denmark) — Second Global Conference: Environmental Justice and Global Citizenship — Environments, Sustainability and Technologies. Website <http://www.interdisciplinary.net/ejgc.htm>.

16-23 March 2003, Kyoto (Japan) — Third World Water Forum. Contact Forum Secretariat, tel (81-3) 5212-1649, e-mail <office@waterforum3.com>, website <www.worldwaterforum.org>.

28 March - 5 April 2003, Oxford (UK) — Global Civil Society – Expectations, Capacities and the Accountability of International NGOs. Contact 21st Century Trust, website <http://www.21stCenturyTrust.org>.

April 2003, Kampala (Uganda) — Workshop for Women Journalists Reporting on HIV/AIDS. Contact Julie Clayton, tel (44-117) 973-0139, fax (44-117) 946-6284.

10-11 April 2003, Athens, Ohio (USA) — Children and Islam. Faith and Social Change in Africa and Southeast Asia, sponsored by the Institute for the African Child and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Contact Acacia Nikoi, tel (740) 593-1837, e-mail <nikoi@ohio.edu>.

7-9 May 2003, Nairobi (Kenya) — Training in Africa: Best Practices, Lessons Learned and Future Directions conference. Contact Rick Sullivan, tel (410) 537-1931, fax (410) 537-1476, e-mail <rsullivan@jhpiego.net>.

13-15 May 2003, Amsterdam (Netherlands) — Sustain 2002 - World Sustainable Energy Exhibition and Conference. Contact Marc Sterel, tel (31-20) 549-1889, e-mail <sustain2003@rai.nl>.

19-23 May 2003, Bonn (Germany) — International Conference on Rural Livelihoods, Forests and Biodiversity. Contact William Sunderlin, tel (251) 622-622, e-mail <Ella.Behlyanwa@unece.org>.

22-24 May 2003, Shanghai (China) — International Conference on Energy and the Environment. Tel (86-21) 6568-9564, e-mail <dpltcu@online.sh.cn>.

30 May - 5 June 2003, Havana (Cuba) — International Convention on Environment and Sustainable Development. Contact Rachel Bruhuke, tel (415) 575-5531, e-mail <rachel@globalexchange.org>.

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE

6-10 January 2003, Accra (Ghana) — Chieftaincy in Africa: Culture, Governance and Development. Contact Dr. Ato Quayson, tel (44-122) 3338145, fax (44-122) 3334396 or Dr. Irene Odotei, tel (233-21) 502397, e-mail <asafo@ghana.com>.

7-9 January 2003, Varanasi (India) — International Conference on Communication for Development in the Information Age. Website <www.uaeu.ac.ae/gera/index.htm>.

16 January 2003, Washington, DC (USA) — New Rules for Global Finance: Tobin Tax Conference. Contact e-mail <jbaker@OXFAMAmerica.Org>, tel (202) 496-1320, fax (202) 496-1190.

16 January 2003, Tokyo (Japan) — Children in Turmoil: Rights of the Child in the Midst of Human Insecurity. High-level international conference organized by the European Commission in Japan in cooperation with UNICEF. Tel (03) 5467-1243, fax (03) 3406-7346.

16-17 January 2003, Washington, DC (USA) and 4 February 2003, Bamako (Mali) — US-West Africa Shea Butter Conference, organized by the US Corporate Council on Africa. Contact Sasah Resnick, tel (202) 535-1115, ext. 508, e-mail <Sresnick@africacncl.org>.

19-25 January 2003, Abuja (Nigeria) — African Youth Assembly. Contact Dapo Saheed, tel (23-41) 773-6575, e-mail <Africanassembly2003@hotmail.com>.

AFRICA BOOKS

Financing for Development: Proposals from Business and Civil Society, eds. Barry Herman, Federica Pietracci and Krishnan Sharma (UN University, 2002; 152 pp; pb $16.50)

Dealing With Conflict in Africa: The United Nations and Regional Organizations by Jane Boulden (Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, New York, 2003; 284 pp; hb £35.00)

WTO: The Doha Agenda: The New Negotiations on World Trade by Bhagirath Lal Das (Zed Books London, 2002; hb £39.95 $49.95; pb £12.95 $17.50)

Women and Land in Africa: Culture, Religion and Realizing Women's Rights, ed. L. Muthoni Wanyeki (Zed Books, London, 2002; hb £55 $75; pb £16.95 $27.50)

Aid: Understanding International Development Cooperation by John Degnbol-Martinussen and Poul Engberg-Pedersen (Zed Books, London, 2002; hb £55 $75; pb £16.95 $27.50)

Une alternative paysanne à la mondialisation néoliberale (CETIM — Centre Europe – Tiers monde, Geneva, Switzerland, 2002; 256 pp; pb €7.50)

Governing Globalization: Issues and Institutions, ed. Deepak Nayyar (Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2002; 412 pp; pb £19.99; hb £55)

Continent of Mothers, Continent of Hope: Understanding and Promoting Development in Africa Today by Torild Skard (Zed Books, London, 2002; hb £45 $65; pb £14.95 $22.50)

Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Miracle or Model? by Lyn S. Graybill (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, CO, US, 2002; 231 pp; pb $49.95; hb $19.95)

From Cape to Congo: Southern Africa's Evolving Security Challenges, eds. Mwesiga Baregu and Christopher Landsberg (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, CO, US, 2003; 400 pp; pb $55; hb $22)

Mondialisation et sociétés rurales en Méditerranée, ed. Mohamed Elloumi (Les Editions Karthala, Paris, 2002; 530 pp, €30)

Africa's Stalled Development: International Causes and Cures by David K. Leonard and Scott Straus (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, CO, US, 2003; 159 pp; pb $17.95; hb $42)

The Paradox of Wealth and Poverty: Mapping the Ethical Dilemmas of Global Development by Daniel Little (Westview Press, Boulder, CO, US, 2003; 304 pp; pb $25.00; hb $80; £15.99)

This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis by Karl Maier (Westview Press, Boulder, CO, US, 2002; 368 pp; pb $18; £12.99)

Africa's Reintegration into the World Economy. African Development Perspectives Yearbook 2000/2001, ed. by Karl Wohlmuth et al. (LIT Verlag, Munich, Germany, and Transaction Publishers, Piscataway, NJ, 2001; 913 pp.)

This ambitious, two-volume study is the latest entry in the series of African development yearbooks compiled and edited by a team of researchers at Germany's University of Bremen. This work, volume 8 of the overall series, looks in great detail at Africa's prospects and challenges in responding to the current trend toward globalization. It includes analytical essays on Africa's global competitiveness, export prospects, investment trends, technology acquisition and experiences towards regional integration within Africa. There also are numerous country case studies (Angola, Botswana, Ghana, Libya, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa and others). In addition, the collection includes reports on policy changes in Africa, the impact of globalization on local communities and social groups (especially women), book reviews and important documents from African organizations.

Information on ordering *Africa's Reintegration into the World Economy* can be obtained by e-mailing <wohlmuth@uni-bremen.de> or, in North America, by phoning Transaction Publishers (1-732) 445-2280 or (1-888) 999-6778.

AFRICA IN BRIEF

UN exposes armies using child soldiers

In a departure from past practice, a new report by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan explicitly names 23 governments and other warring parties that recruit and use children as soldiers. "For the first time in an official report to the Security Council, those who violate standards for the protection of war-affected children have been specifically named and listed," emphasizes Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Secretary-General's special representative for children and armed conflict. The report, released in December, is the third such annual review of progress in protecting children affected by conflict.

While various international agreements set 18 as the minimum age for compulsory recruitment and direct participation in hostilities, the "challenge today is to ensure their implementation on the ground," the report states. There are an estimated 300,000 child soldiers across the world.

UN

Olara Otunnu: "This is the beginning of a systematic effort."

In Africa, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia are the only governments identified as currently not complying with these international norms. More than a dozen rebel or insurgent factions are also listed, in these countries and in Somalia. Although it does not list them, the report also cites evidence that child soldiers are in the ranks of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, in southern Sudan, and the Lord's Resistance Army, a rebel group in northern Uganda, which is believed to have abducted more than 10,000 children over the last 15 years. The report commends Eritrea and Ethiopia for not recruiting child soldiers in their recent border war, which ended in late 2000.

By publicly identifying those who recruit child soldiers, the report concludes, the international community is demonstrating that it will not allow those violating children's rights to do so with impunity. Mr Otunnu notes that the published list provides an advocacy tool for governments, civil society groups and the media to apply pressure to cease such exploitation. "This is the beginning of a systematic effort in a new era of monitoring and reporting on the conduct of parties and how they treat children during conflict," says Mr. Otunnu. ■

NGO review dissects adjustment policies

In 1996, a network of non-governmental organizations, with World Bank and government participation, launched a multi-year investigation on the impact of structural adjustment programmes. Known as the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI), in Africa the study was carried out in Ghana, Uganda and Zimbabwe. It examined the impact of trade and financial sector liberalization, labour market reforms, agricultural and mining reforms and public expenditure policies on the productive sectors, social services, employment and women's access to resources. In August 2001, the World Bank withdrew from the initiative owing to disagreement with its preliminary findings. The final report, entitled *The Policy Roots of Economic Crisis and Poverty*, was released by the NGO participants in April 2002. Some of its findings were:

- Precipitous and indiscriminate trade liberalization and the weakening of state support have devastated local industry. Domestic businesses in many countries could not compete with the flood of foreign, subsidized imports, forcing them to close.
- In agriculture, underpriced imports, the removal of subsidies on inputs and the withdrawal of the state from providing technical and marketing assistance eroded the viability of local farmers. Emphasis on export production marginalized poorer domestic farmers.
- Labour market reforms and privatization have led to less employment and lower wages in many countries undergoing adjustment. Workers' rights and the power of unions have also been significantly weakened by reforms granting employers greater flexibility.
- Privatization of public services and the introduction of user fees, particularly in health care, have put these services out of reach of many poor, who cannot afford the market rates charged. This has discouraged many, especially in the rural areas, from even seeking medical care.
- The brunt of the impact of policy reforms has fallen heavily on women. Because they are the majority of those in the informal and small business sectors in many countries, they have been undermined by import liberalization and rising credit rates. In the formal sector, labour reforms have at times also hurt women, for instance by removing the right to benefits such as maternity leave.

The study concluded that many of these problems were caused or exacerbated by adjustment programmes. (See: http://www.saprin.org/SAPRI_Findings.pdf) ■

Annan congratulates Kenyan presidential winner

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has congratulated Kenya's new President Mwai Kibaki and his National Rainbow Coalition party for their success in the country's general elections on 27 December. The victory marks the first time that the Kenya African National Union (KANU) has been voted out of power since independence from Britain in 1963, and ends the 24-year rule of Mr. Daniel arap Moi. President Kibaki defeated the ruling party candidate, Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, son of Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta.

In a statement issued through his spokesman, Mr. Annan commended Kenyans "for their enthusiastic and orderly participation" in the elections and praised government authorities for conducting a well organized and credible election. Previous presidential and parliamentary elections were marred by allegations of fraud and intimidation.

Mr. Annan also commended Mr. Moi and his party for accepting the election results. "I accept the choice of the people that Kibaki will be the third president of this country," Mr. Moi said after the results were announced. "From those ashes a strong foundation will begin." Mr. Kibaki's Rainbow Coalition won more than 60 per cent of the vote compared to KANU's 30 per cent.

Born on 15 November 1931, Mr Kibaki is a former economics lecturer at Makerere University in Uganda. He previously was a vice president under Mr. Moi, as well as the country's longest serving finance minister, from 1969 to 1982. His party campaigned on promises that included providing free primary education for all and ridding the government of corruption. The International Monetary Fund had suspended loans to Kenya in 2000 after the government did not fulfil commitments on tackling corruption or privatizing state enterprises. ■

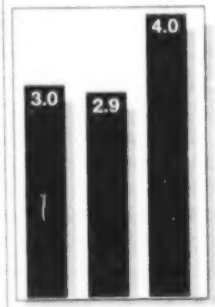
AFRICA WATCH

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Africa to grow by 4%

In 2003, economic growth in Africa is expected to accelerate to 4 per cent, from just 2.9 per cent last year. *The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2003*, released in January by the UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), reports that this projection is based largely on more rapid expansion in several of the continent's largest economies — such as South Africa and Algeria — as well as further consolidation of the domestic economic recovery that some countries experienced in 2002. The forecast also hinges on several other factors: no major disruptions in global economic activities as a result of a possible war in Iraq, a modest recovery in commodity prices for some African exports and no new major droughts or armed conflicts.

GDP growth in Africa
annual % change



*Projected
Source: UN Africa Recovery from DESA data

Such external factors also played a role in 2002's disappointing growth, notes the DESA report, down slightly from 3 per cent the year before. This was due mainly to weak external demand for African exports, depressed prices for many primary commodities, severe drought in eastern and southern Africa and economic and political instability in several of Africa's largest economies.

Contrary to the trend in recent years, the large economies of North Africa performed less well than those of sub-Saharan Africa. Both Algeria and Libya had slow growth due to oil production cuts resulting from lower quotas in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Tourism in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt still felt the negative effects of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US, and North African exports suffered overall from reduced demand in Europe, the region's main trading partner. Overall, growth in North Africa was just 1.9 per cent.

Meanwhile, sub-Saharan Africa (excluding Nigeria and South Africa) grew by 3.7 per cent in 2002. This growth, however, was highly uneven, with a number of countries, especially in Southern Africa, suffering from severe drought. Zimbabwe, which has been hit by drought, poor economic management and political conflict, saw its economy shrink by 12 per cent, for the third consecutive year of economic contraction.

One hopeful sign for future economic growth, notes DESA, has been progress over the past year in settling several of Africa's more persistent conflicts, including those in Angola and Sierra Leone, and progress in peace negotiations in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Sudan. ■

ECOSOC

Guinea-Bissau slated for post-war support

Guinea-Bissau is expected to become the first country to benefit from a new initiative of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to better coordinate international assistance to countries emerging from conflict. In October, the Council, one of the six main organs of the UN, set up an advisory group to assess the country's humanitarian and economic needs.

Guinea-Bissau, one of the poorest countries in West Africa, was ravaged by civil war in 1998 that displaced an estimated one-third of the population. By 1999, peace was restored and elections have since been held. But the government's inability to meet short-term social needs, the slow pace of demobilization and drought continue to threaten stability. Despite its dire financial and economic difficulties, the country currently does not have a programme with the International Monetary Fund, making it extremely hard to secure donor assistance.

The ECOSOC advisory group, chaired by South African Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo, will report back to the Council early in 2003. The initiative will seek to encourage donors to resume major assistance to Guinea-Bissau, to prevent a relapse into conflict. ■

ALEXANDRIA

A library reborn in Africa

After almost 30 years of planning, the Bibliotheca Alexandria, a large, modern world-class library, was inaugurated in October in Alexandria, Egypt. A joint project of the government of Egypt and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Bibliotheca Alexandria has arisen on the site where the ancient library of Alexandria stood before it was destroyed by a fire more than 2,000 years ago, after seven centuries as the world's foremost centre of learning and science.

"The revival of this renowned institution goes to the heart of UNESCO's mission to promote the development and sharing of knowledge for mutual understanding and the affirmation of cultural identity, diversity and dialogue among civilizations," says Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, UNESCO's director-general.

Bibliotheca Alexandria was conceived as a centre of culture, science and academic research, with libraries, museums, a planetarium, exhibition areas, educational centres and an international conference centre. The building is distinguished by a granite wall covered with the letters of all the world's alphabets. It already is the largest library in the Middle East and Africa, holding 240,000 books, 1,500 periodicals and 500 computers. The ancient library of Alexandria at its peak probably held some 700,000 scrolls, equivalent to about 100-125,000 printed books today. The new library has considerable scope for expansion, with a capacity to hold as many as 8 million books. ■

APPOINTMENTS

***Ms. Sheila Sisulu**, a South African national, was appointed as one of the World Food Programme's two deputy executive directors, on 1 February 2003. At the time, she was her country's ambassador to the US, a post she held since 1999, after two years as consul general in New York. Previously, following the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, she served as special adviser to the minister of education on special projects including youth, health, gender equity and early childhood education. Ms. Sisulu, 53, is the first woman to be appointed to the position of deputy executive director at WFP.*

*The UN Secretary-General has appointed **Mr. Abou Moussa** of Chad as his representative in Liberia and head of the UN Peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia. Since 1980, Mr. Moussa had worked in various positions at the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, most recently as regional director for Africa.*